

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1-100 (Cancelled)

101. (New) A hearing aid comprising:

a microphone for receiving sound in a vicinity of a user;

a sound processor for processing the sound into a processed sound;

a speaker for outputting the processed sound into a vicinity of an ear canal of the user;

a signal detector for monitoring a condition corresponding to the remotely located communications device and generating an output in response to the monitored condition; and
an automatic switching mechanism that, in response to the signal detector output, is configured to be alternately placed between a first state that couples the microphone to the speaker through the sound processor, and a second state that couples the microphone to a remotely located communications device.

102. (New) The hearing aid of claim 101, wherein the speaker is coupled to the remotely located communications device when the switching mechanism is in the second state.

103. (New) The hearing aid of claim 101, wherein the condition is a ring condition indicating an incoming call on the remotely located communications device.

104. (New) The hearing aid of claim 101, wherein the condition is an active telephone line indicating an outgoing call on the remotely located communications device.

105. (New) The hearing aid of claim 101, wherein the condition is the absence of an active telephone line for a predetermined period of time.

106. (New) The hearing aid of claim 101, further comprising a manual switch having a first position for coupling the microphone to the speaker through the sound processor, and a second position for coupling the microphone to the remotely located communications device.

107. (New) The hearing aid of claim 101, further comprising another switching mechanism having a first position corresponding to a power conservation mode and a second position corresponding to a normal use mode.

108. (New) The hearing aid of claim 101, wherein the microphone is coupled to the remotely located communications device through the sound processor when the switching mechanism is in the second state.

109. (New) The hearing aid of claim 108, further comprising a controller coupled to the sound processor, the controller providing a first set of control parameters to the sound processor when the switching mechanism is in the first state and a second set of control parameters to the sound processor when the switching mechanism is in the second state.

110. (New) The hearing aid of claim 109, wherein the first set of control parameters is adapted to address a specific hearing impairment.

111. (New) The hearing aid of claim 109, wherein the second set of control parameters is adapted to address an identified deficiency in sound quality associated with the remotely located communications device.

112. (New) A hearing aid comprising:

a microphone;

a sound processor;

a speaker;

a signal detector for monitoring a condition corresponding to the remotely located communications device and generating an output in response to the monitored condition; and

an automatic switching mechanism that, in response to the signal detector output, alters the hearing aid between a hearing aid state, during which the microphone operates as an input device to the speaker through the sound processor to address a specific hearing impairment, and a bi-directional communication state during which the microphone operates as an input device for a remotely located communications device, and the speaker operates as an output device for the remotely located communications device.

113. (New) The hearing aid of claim 112, wherein the condition is a ring condition indicating an incoming call on the remotely located communications device.

114. (New) The hearing aid of claim 112, wherein the condition is an active telephone line indicating an outgoing call on the remotely located communications device.

115. (New) The hearing aid of claim 112, wherein the condition is the absence of an active telephone line for a predetermined period of time.

116. (New) The hearing aid of claim 112, further comprising a manual switch for altering the hearing aid between the hearing aid state and the bi-directional communication state.

117. (New) The hearing aid of claim 112, further comprising another switching mechanism for placing the hearing aid into a sleep state, wherein power to at least some components is shutdown.

118. (New) The hearing aid of claim 112, wherein the microphone is coupled to the remotely located communications device through the sound processor when the hearing aid is in the bi-directional communication state.

119. (New) The hearing aid of claim 118, further comprising a controller coupled to the sound processor for providing a first set of control parameters to the sound processor when the hearing aid is in the hearing aid state and a second set of control parameters to the sound processor when the hearing aid is in the bi-directional communication state.

120. (New) The hearing aid of claim 119, wherein the first set of control parameters is adapted to address a specific hearing impairment.

121. (New) The hearing aid of claim 119, wherein the second set of control parameters is adapted to address an identified deficiency in sound quality associated with the remotely located communications device.

122. (New) The hearing aid of claim 119, wherein the second set of control parameters is adapted to provide noise filtering.

123. (New) The hearing aid of claim 119, wherein the speaker is coupled to the remotely located communications device through the sound processor when the hearing aid is in the bi-directional communication state.

124. (New) The hearing aid of claim 123, wherein second set of control parameters is adapted to compensate for a specific hearing impairment.

125. (New) The hearing aid of claim 112, further comprising a manual switch for selecting a hearing aid mode wherein the hearing aid state is enabled, and a communication mode wherein the hearing aid state is disabled.

126. (New) The hearing aid of claim 125, further comprising another switching mechanism configured for altering the hearing aid between a sleep state and the bi-directional communication state, when the hearing aid is in the communication mode.

127. (New) The hearing aid of claim 126, wherein the other switching mechanism alternates between the sleep and bi-directional communication states in response to the output from the signal detector.

128. (New) The hearing aid of claim 112, wherein the microphone is configured to receive sounds in the vicinity of a user, and the speaker is configured to output sounds in the vicinity of an ear canal of the user.

129. (New) A hearing aid comprising:

a microphone;

a sound processor;

a speaker;

a switching mechanism having a first state that couples the microphone to the speaker through the sound processor to address a specific hearing impairment, and a second state that couples the microphone to a remotely located communications device through the sound processor to address an identified deficiency in sound quality associated with the remotely located communications device.

130. (New) The hearing aid of claim 129, wherein the switch is an automatic switch.

131. (New) The hearing aid of claim 129, wherein the switch is a manual switch.
132. (New) The hearing aid of claim 129, further comprising a signal detector for monitoring a condition corresponding to the remotely located communications device and generating an output in response to the monitored condition, wherein the switching mechanism alternates between the first and second states in response to the signal detector output.
133. (New) The hearing aid of claim 129, wherein the identified deficiency is ambient background noise.
134. (New) The hearing aid of claim 129, wherein the speaker is coupled to the remotely located communications device when the switching mechanism is in the second state.
135. (New) The hearing aid of claim 134, wherein the speaker is coupled to the remotely located communication device through the sound processor to compensate for a specific hearing impairment.
136. (New) The hearing aid of claim 129, further comprising another switching mechanism having a first position corresponding to a power conservation mode and a second position corresponding to a normal use mode.
137. (New) The hearing aid of claim 129, further comprising a controller coupled to the sound processor for providing a first set of control parameters adapted to address the specific hearing impairment when the switching mechanism is in the first state and a second set of control parameters adapted to address the identified deficiency in sound quality associated with the remotely located communications device when the switching mechanism is in the second state.

138. (New) The hearing aid of claim 129, wherein the microphone is configured to receive sounds in the vicinity of a user, and the speaker is configured to output sounds in the vicinity of an ear canal of the user.